

V. QUALITY ASSURANCE

Collecting high quality data begins with the interviewer. In order to ensure that the evaluation data meet the highest standards, the quality control procedures described in this chapter will be implemented. Your supervisor will monitor interviewer performance, including application of proper interviewing techniques, production rates, and the number of refusals and break-offs experienced, to ensure that standards are met.

A. Training

The training you receive will hopefully prepare to conduct the evaluation interviews following the approved procedures. You need to have a thorough understanding of purpose and design of Project HOPE in order to conduct your tasks according to protocol standards. The training session will be your opportunity to ask questions and receive clarification on any aspect of your tasks that you need. No issue or question that you raise will be unimportant. The Manual of Operations that is used during your training should also be used as reference or resource tool throughout the study. As procedures are clarified or modified, the Manual will be updated and distributed to you.

During training you will be able to practice administering the evaluation questionnaires and will learn how to handle various situations that you may encounter. Your performance at training will be evaluated, and, if you require additional training in specific areas, it will be provided to you before you receive any assignments.

B. Interviewer Editing

Immediately after you complete an interview, but before you get off the telephone with a respondent, scan edit the form for omissions or incomplete items. Then, conduct a more thorough edit immediately after getting off the phone with the respondent, so if there is any reason to contact her to clarify or complete an item, you can reach her. Editing involves:

- Making sure you have followed skip patterns correctly, and making sure you have an answer recorded for every appropriate question. If a question that should have an answer is blank, we have to assume that you did not ask it. Therefore, make sure you have recorded something for every appropriate question, even “refused” or “don’t know” or “not applicable”.
- Making sure your writing is legible.
- Clarifying any word or phrase that you abbreviated while administering the questionnaire.
- Documenting anything about the interview that may help us understand and analyze the responses in the notes section on the last page of the questionnaire.

C. Verifications

In order to provide continuing control of the quality and accuracy of the evaluation interviews, your work will be thoroughly verified. Inaccurate or falsified work is very costly to the project; therefore, please keep in mind that all completed work is subject to the verification procedures. Verification contacts will be made by telephone to a percentage of the women who have completed the interviews. You should mention to your respondents that they may be contacted to verify your work.

D. Weekly Meetings

Your supervisor will arrange weekly meetings with the team of evaluation interviewers. Be sure that you have access to the Contact Evaluation Booklets for your assigned cases so that you can refer to them during the meeting. During these meetings you should be prepared to discuss the following issues:

- Your work progress. Because the evaluation interviews must be completed within a certain “window of time”, it is important that you keep all scheduled appointments and proactively try to contact women who elude you. Although it is best for you to conduct all interviews with an individual participant because of the rapport that is established it is possible that your schedule and the need to contact a participant may require assignments to be exchanged. During your weekly meetings, the discussion will focus on how best to complete the evaluation interview with any given participant.
- Any refusals or other noninterviews. Be sure that you have fully documented the circumstances resulting in any refusal or other noninterview in the Evaluation Contact Booklet. For refusals, document whether the refusal is directly from the woman or a “gatekeeper” and the reason for the refusal. It is possible that your supervisor will reassign these cases to another interviewer if she believes that different interviewer’s manner, voice and style may convert the case into a completed interview. Your impression and opinion regarding this will be an important factor in how your supervisor will handle the situation.
- Problems with quality of work. You should be prepared to share any doubts you have concerning your understanding of procedures or the meaning or administration of specific question items so that they can be clarified. It is likely that other team members have similar concerns. In turn, your supervisor will bring to your attention any problems identified while editing your work.
- Problems encountered during the week. If circumstances arose during an interview that were not discussed at training, the team and your supervisor will work together to formulate a procedure to handle these situations. It is important that these procedures be established together so that the entire team standardly implements them.

- Sharing your feelings. It is possible that you will encounter situations about a participant that may cause you to be concerned for her or may distress you. Because we have assured a woman that her participation and her responses to our questions are strictly confidential, it is important that you do not discuss a participant's situation to anyone outside the project staff. These weekly meetings will give you an opportunity to share your feelings with your team members who will understand them. If you encounter a situation in which the safety of the participant or child in the household concerns you, discuss it with your supervisor. She will provide the appropriate guidance.

E. Reports

The Data Coordinating Center will supply your supervisor with periodic reports that will help her assess your performance. These reports will help her evaluate both production and work quality. Reports on the final results of your assignments will give her information on refusal rates and overall production. Likewise, reports on cases that are not completed within the “window of time” will alert her to problems that could be related to your perseverance and commitment. Edit reports for completed questionnaires will provide her information on the care you take in recording responses and following instructions on the questionnaire. She will use these reports, not to “police” your performance, but to improve it and ensure that Project HOPE is conducted with quality and integrity.